United Nations S/2012/686

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 September 2012

Original: English

Letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Germany, the Security Council will hold a high-level meeting on the subject "The situation in the Middle East" on Wednesday, 26 September 2012. In order to help steer the discussions on the subject, Germany has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and the annex thereto could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Wittig**
Permanent Representative

12-50031 (E) 120912

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

High-level meeting of the Security Council on peace and security in the Middle East

Concept paper

1. The recent developments in the Middle East and the Arab world are at the centre of international attention and diplomatic efforts. Over the past 18 months, the Security Council has been confronted with several threats to peace and security in the region. The League of Arab States, in addressing these developments, has also played a crucial role for the maintenance of international peace and security.

2. The meeting of the Security Council to be held at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 26 September 2012 is to analyse and assess issues that are currently on the agendas of both the Security Council and the League of Arab States. The objective is to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations in their common efforts for peace and stability in the Middle East. The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Guido Westerwelle.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil Elaraby, are expected to brief the Council.

Common challenges for the Security Council and the League of Arab States ...

4. The United Nations is strongly engaged in the Arab world, particularly in the field of peacekeeping and peacebuilding (the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya). The Security Council and/or the General Assembly remain engaged in addressing several specific situations in the region, including Israel and Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq.

5. The League of Arab States has been actively working for the resolution of a number of conflicts in the Middle East and the Arab world, e.g. in Libya and Yemen, and the Israeli-Palestinian question. On 31 January 2012, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States briefed the Security Council on the League's efforts to reach peace in the Syrian Arab Republic.

6. In his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (S/2012/614), the United Nations Secretary-General highlights the growing cooperation between the United Nations system and the League of Arab States, including on questions of international peace and security. It encompasses the whole range of conflict prevention and resolution issues, thus looking at peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as well as disarmament and combating organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking.

7. The fundamental changes that began to unfold in the Arab world a year and a half ago have dramatically added to these challenges. The legitimate aspirations of the people in the region to more democracy, economic freedom and human rights —

the pillars of sustainable peace and stability — engender new opportunities and responsibilities for both organizations. Reflecting this common responsibility, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States appointed Kofi Annan as their Joint Special Envoy to Syria and, at the end of his mandate, Lakhdar Brahimi as their Joint Special Representative for Syria.

... and how to meet them

8. The League of Arab States has assumed a leading and unifying role with regard to regional peace and security, speaking in a clear voice to the international community. It has become the key interlocutor between the region and the world. In remarks made on the occasion of the League of Arab States summit held in Baghdad on 29 March 2012, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "the Arab Awakening has given the League of Arab States a new sense of purpose" and that, in historic times, it has "led by example".

9. In times of transition, it is necessary to foster and intensify the fruitful cooperation between the Security Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, and the League of Arab States, which, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, interacts with the Security Council in the context of the pacific settlement of disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security. And while the internal developments in each Arab country have their own unique character, the international community must take a fresh look at the region as a whole. The United Nations should build a comprehensive partnership with the League of Arab States that will help to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the people in the Arab world and to tackle the common challenges in the political, security, economic and social fields.

10. Working with the representatives of the League of Arab States, we want to explore concrete options for enhanced cooperation with the Security Council and between the secretariats of the two organizations. The Security Council should work together with the League of Arab States to positively influence regional processes in order to prevent them from degenerating into disputes.

11. Participants in the meeting of the Security Council are invited to explore the strategic aspects of cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States. While attention to specific conflicts on the agenda is welcome, we would like to encourage participants to address overarching as well as institutional questions. The latter could include:

- How can we strengthen the existing League of Arab States-United Nations cooperation on political issues?
- How can we jointly place greater emphasis on conflict prevention and resolution?
- Should we regularly assess the cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States? Should we follow similar examples and have annual meetings between the Security Council and the League of Arab States?
- How can we strengthen the institutional ties between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, e.g., by establishing a United Nations liaison office in Cairo? Is there specific United Nations expertise that might be useful in building further capacity?